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1970/10/05

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TELEGRAM Foreign Service of the United States of America

OUTGOING AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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Date: OCT 5, 1970

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1. I met again privately with President Thieu afternoon of October 5.

2. I informed Thieu that President Nixon currently contemplated making the public presentation of our initiative on October 7. I said that while it was of course possible that unforeseen developments might require delaying this date, we wanted to share our plans with him now so that he might make arrangements for whatever consultative process he considered essential to his endorsement of the President's proposal. I added that the proposed date of the presentation should of course be held in strictest secrecy for the time being.

3. Thieu asked what form the President's presentation would

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
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By KBH, NARA, Date 6/1/99

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take. I said I assumed it would be a statement on the Viet-Nam situation, including of course the four interrelated points with which he was familiar. In response to Thieu's question as to whether the President would refer to his European trip, I said I assumed the President would at least mention his consultations with Ambassador Bruce.

4. I then told Thieu I had been asked to take up with him another aspect of our negotiating strategy, i. e., the issue of political settlement. I said that whereas our presentation will not address this issue since we consider it a matter to be worked out by the Vietnamese themselves, we believed some statement by Thieu on political settlement would give added impact to our side's negotiating posture. It would also serve to blunt any criticism that our initiative left aside this important element of an overall settlement of the Viet-Nam conflict. I said that, as Thieu himself had frequently stated, free elections are the key to a political settlement.

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They also offered the most effective rejoinder to communist demands for the overthrow of his administration and establishment of a coalition government.

5. I next referred to Vice President Ky's talks with our delegation and Kissinger in Paris. I recalled Ky's suggestion that the proposals we had made on various issues at different times should be drawn together into one package. I then reviewed Ky's comments on free elections, including his ideas of the composition and functions of an electoral commission (ref C). I said these views seemed to be generally in line with the position Thieu had already taken.

6. I said we believed it would be most helpful to our joint posture in the forthcoming initiative if Thieu made a statement in about two weeks time in which he elaborated on the conditions of a political settlement with emphasis on the method of holding elections. This statement would, of course, be separate from, but in addition to, the support Thieu planned to give to President

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Nixon's proposals immediately after they are presented publicly on or about October 7. The intervening period of two weeks would give us time to coordinate our views on these issues.

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7. Thieu agreed that a statement on political settlement would be useful. He said he would first make a statement in support of our initiative, noting that the GVN had been consulted. He thought we should then wait and see how the other side reacts to our initiative. Once we have studied their reaction in detail, we should give thought to the timing of the GVN's statement on political settlement. Thieu said he would want to consider whether that statement should be made two weeks later, as we had suggested, or whether it should be made in his speech to the National Assembly. He said at this point he was inclined to think it should be done sooner than his Assembly speech, and certainly no later.

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8. I then suggested that Thieu would now want to ask Ky to return to Saigon so that he could inform Ky of our initiative and consult on the GVN's statement.

9. Thieu replied that he had told Ky that he should make no statement, and that he would be free until at least October 6, at which time Thieu would let him know if he should return. Thieu said he was not sure of Ky's present whereabouts and that he did not think it essential that Ky return before then. He would nevertheless try to have him return right away. He said that if this proved impossible he could inform Ky of the general substance of the President's statement a few hours before it is made.

10. Finally, Thieu asked about the status of our coordination with Lon Nol and Souvanna. I said that both have agreed in principle to our initiative, but that in the light of our consultations with Lon Nol we intended to alter our public formulation regarding an international conference to omit specific reference to "all

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interested parties" as participants. Also, our proposal would make reference to the 1954 Geneva Accords. I noted that these changes were in line with the fact that we have no rigid position concerning the form or composition of the proposed international conference.

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